smaller churches, such as Mount Calvary (also known as Mount Moriah) moved around within the city in the years following the riot before they established a firm base. One immediate problem facing some of the churches was a steep decline in attendance. The congregations of all churches diminished in size in the immediate weeks and months following the violence because of the mass exodus of blacks from the city. Because of the out-migration that occurred following the violence, local oral tradition holds that St. Stephen's lost about 800 members, about half of its congregation.[77]

Collective Memory

As the men, women and children who were in the city in 1898 aged, knowledge of the violence and coup was maintained within the community. The narrative, or explanation, of what happened and why it happened varied according to the age, sex, race, and economic position that narrators occupied in the 20th century. Most white upper class families maintained that the coup and violence were necessary evils and that they did what was necessary to end municipal corruption and dangerous conditions. Some African American families, particularly those that remained in the city through the exodus, informed their children about the riot and warned children to be wary of whites. Still more African Americans moved to the city after the violence from the countryside to fill the vacancies left by migration. These newcomers, many of whom arrived fully understanding the ramifications of Jim Crow legislation and racial hatred, learned to adapt and live in the city separated from whites in a way never experienced until the cataclysm of November 1898. [78]

The African American story of the riot took shape, in part, as an object lesson on the lengths whites would go to in order to achieve their agenda. The stories also helped to educate future generations about the difficult relationships between whites and blacks in the city, particularly learning which whites were sympathetic to the plight of blacks. For example, Lura Beam, a white northern teacher who arrived in Wilmington to teach African American students between 1908 and 1910, observed that her students "hated the mass of white people but they were proud of learned people, the local cotton king, his home, his family and his horses." She also noted that they had "contempt" for the foreigners in town. Despite financial hardships, her native students were proud of their Cape Fear heritage. [79]

Providing further insight into the culture of post-1898 Wilmington, Beam demonstrated that she also learned to be wary of local native whites. As a white woman and outsider who entered the tense world of post-1898 Wilmington, Beam experienced perils as a teacher and was warned by another white teacher from Massachusetts that there was a "policy" that

[77] Attempts were made to study the records of some of the city's African American A.M.E. churches for this project. The early records of St. Stephen's are scant and in poor condition – the earliest ledger dated to 1898 and recorded Sunday school information. Other records for the church date to the twentieth century. Overall, the records of St. Stephen's do not provide much detail about the church's congregation before or after the riot. The records of St. Luke's cannot be located. The church experienced a catastrophic fire during the mid-twentieth century and its records could have been destroyed at that time. A search of the records at the Heritage Hall at Livingstone College did not provide any additional information. Interview with Reverend John Burton of St. Stephen's April 31, 2004.

[78] For more information on the memory of the riot and its long-term impact on the city, see Leslie Hossfeld, *Narrative, Political Unconscious and Racial Violence in Wilmington, North Carolina* (New York: Routledge, 2005) and Appendix M.

[79] Lura Beam, *He Called Them by the Lightening*, 15, 18, 27, 36.